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Directorate of Intelligence
Central Intelligence Agency

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3/17/88

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
DATE: NOV 2003

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CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN
WEEKLY UPDATE

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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN WEEKLY UPDATE

17 March 1988

This weekly Situation Report is prepared by [redacted]
[redacted] Office of African and Latin
American Analysis. This paper was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. Comments and queries are
welcome and may be directed to the Chief, [redacted]
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CENTRAL AMERICAN PEACE PLAN
WEEKLY UPDATE
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Perspective: Nicaraguan Rebels Softening Cease-fire Stance

The insurgents appear more willing to reach a cease-fire agreement with the Sandinistas. In accepting Managua's offer to resume negotiations next Monday, they dropped their preconditions for a preliminary meeting and for exclusive discussion of the agenda proposed by Cardinal Obando last month. Instead, the talks will begin with an open agenda and no Sandinista promises to discuss political issues. []

Concern over their deteriorating battlefield position and uncertain US and Honduran support could prompt the rebels to make additional concessions at the bargaining table. They may now settle for vague Sandinista assurances that political issues will be discussed at a later date. They also may be prepared to drop their earlier proposal for a cease-fire in place. Although they would still be reluctant to accept the Sandinista demand to assemble in designated cease-fire zones, they would be more likely to consider it if they believed it necessary to save lives. Similarly, the insurgents may now be willing to agree to limit any new aid to nonmilitary supplies funneled through a third party such as the Red Cross. Their worsening finances and inability to feed their families probably are powerful pressures to give in on this point. []

The Sandinistas realize they are going into the talks in a strong position and are unlikely to make major concessions of their own. They probably expect that the rebels are desperate for military relief and the opportunity to obtain resupply. Managua probably believes the rebels will give in on a number of points to avoid prolonging the talks and to obtain at least a temporary truce. On the battlefield, the Sandinistas are sustaining pressure on rebel headquarters across the border in Honduras in order to deal a major blow to the insurgency and to weaken the rebels' bargaining position. Managua probably wants to avoid the impression of ruthlessness, however, to prevent new US aid and to deter international condemnation. []

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Democratization

- A Nicaraguan peasant was killed and others injured when the security services tried to prevent them from proceeding to a labor demonstration on 6 March []
- Nicaraguan opposition parties and independent labor unions are planning a demonstration in Masaya on 20 March [] Another event is planned for 1 May in Managua. Meanwhile, a march in Managua scheduled for 10 March was canceled after the police rejected the proposed route. The organizers feared the alternate routes suggested by the police would leave them open to attacks by proregime mobs, []
- The Salvadoran Christian Democratic Party plans to use unmarked government vehicles to transport voters to the polls if the guerrillas announce a transportation stoppage [] The party will announce that the vehicles are to be used for all voters but does not intend to make them available to other political groups. []
- Guatemalan President Cerezo [] would contact Costa Rican President Arias and Salvadoran President Duarte to discuss a strategy to get the Sandinistas to live up to their peace commitments and negotiate political issues in cease-fire talks. Nevertheless, Cerezo has no clear idea of how to proceed, and his preliminary ideas concern creating conditions for free elections for a Central American Parliament. []

Cease-Fire/Amnesty

- Nicaraguan cease-fire talks will be held 21-23 March in the Nicaraguan border town of Sapoa, according to press. The agenda is open, and Cardinal Obando and the Secretary General of the OAS will observe the proceedings. Adolfo Calero and Humberto Ortega will head the negotiating teams. Daniel Ortega said he expects that the cutoff of US funding and Sandinista military pressure will force the rebels to be more accommodating in the talks. []
- Nicaraguan Indian leaders authorized Brooklyn Rivera to pursue cease-fire talks with Managua, according to press. The decision was made at an assembly meeting held 26-29 February in a Honduran border town. Meanwhile, Rivera has agreed to have Indian rebels support Sandinista troops guarding the Atlantic coast from attacks by the

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[redacted]
main insurgent group [redacted]
[redacted]

-- A report [redacted]

[redacted] claims there are fewer than 3,400 political prisoners in Nicaragua and a majority of those are ex-National Guardsmen. [redacted]

[redacted] disputes the findings, and the [redacted] says the survey does not include state security facilities where the majority of political prisoners are believed held. [redacted]

-- The Salvadoran rebels announced on 8 March that they will propose new talks with the government in early April. The rebel announcement followed a meeting with Archbishop Rivera y Damas, who, according to the insurgents, believes there will be opportunities for talks following the 20 March elections. President Duarte, however, already has rejected the rebel proposal. [redacted]

-- Documents captured by the Salvadoran military last month indicate the rebels reject any prospect of national reconciliation. [redacted] The documents, which were being sent from one senior rebel commander to another, state that peace talks are only a political tactic to weaken the government while the rebels intensify the military struggle. [redacted]

-- Guatemalan Archbishop Penados announced on 6 March that he would travel to Mexico this week to meet with Guatemalan guerrilla leaders about the possibility of Church mediation in renewed talks with the government. [redacted] Penados's remarks came as a surprise, because they followed a meeting with government and military officials and statements by President Cerezo that Church mediation was not required unless the rebels lay down their arms. On 15 March, the Archbishop told the press he was cancelling his plans so as not to complicate President Cerezo's trip to Mexico next week. [redacted]

National Reconciliation

-- The Nicaraguan Government declined to attend a meeting of the National Reconciliation Commission on 10 March, [redacted] Cardinal Obando said [redacted] that the Sandinistas are looking for a way to rid themselves of the commission. The government has agreed to attend the next session, scheduled for 14 March. Meanwhile, an opposition leader believes the national dialogue should resume without requiring the Sandinistas first to agree to constitutional reforms, [redacted]

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Aid to Insurgents

- Nicaraguan Interior Minister Tomas Borge said in mid-February that the Sandinistas are working behind the scenes to strengthen relations with leftist movements in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras [redacted]

[redacted] Borge added that Nicaragua will provide direct military support to revolutionary movements in El Salvador and Guatemala and will look for ways to assist insurgents in Colombia and Peru as well. Borge said that Managua does not want its activities exposed so as to leave open the option of working under the peace plan. [redacted]

- Mexican Foreign Minister Sepulveda told a Salvadoran insurgent [redacted] that the rebels could continue their operations in Mexico indefinitely, [redacted]

[redacted] A few days earlier, Sepulveda had publicly denied a Salvadoran government charge that Mexico allowed the insurgents to engage in activities aimed at undermining the Duarte government. [redacted]

[redacted] Sepulveda had said [redacted] that he will continue to accuse El Salvador of human rights violations. [redacted]

- Eight Hondurans from several radical leftist groups were scheduled to travel to Nicaragua in late February for three months of ideological and military training, [redacted]

Other Developments

- Costa Rican president Arias told [redacted] on 11 March that he believes the Sandinistas have made a major concession in agreeing to direct high-level cease-fire talks, in contrast to rebel intransigence. In Arias's opinion, the insurgents should shift from a military to a political struggle and must make concessions in the talks, including deferring discussion of political issues. Arias said he will not denounce Sandinista noncompliance with the peace accord until a cease-fire is reached, since it is futile to continue pressuring Managua so long as it has the war as an excuse. [redacted]

- Costa Rican President Arias told [redacted] on 11 March that Spanish Prime Minister Gonzalez has accepted his invitation to visit San Jose and is expected on 25 March.

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[REDACTED]

-- Canadian Foreign Minister Clark will meet with Contadora counterparts--except Panama--in Montreal on 27-28 March,

[REDACTED] the current meeting is the latest in a series Clark has held with the group, usually at the UN. At the last meeting in September, the Contadora countries had asked for consultations before the Western economic summit. [REDACTED]

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HONDURAN AND NICARAGUA VERIFICATION PROPOSALS

The Central American Foreign Ministers will meet in Guatemala on 23-24 March in their capacity as Executive Commission under the peace accord. At their last meeting in San Salvador in mid-February, they agreed to decide which countries and international organizations should provide technical aid for verification of peace commitments and to study proposals made by Honduras and Nicaragua. ☐

The Honduran Proposal

Background: In February, Honduras renewed a proposal introduced at the OAS General Assembly in November 1987. At the time, Tegucigalpa hoped to stake out a position independent of Washington and to defuse the impression that its opposition to immediate verification was an obstacle to the peace process. Honduran Foreign Minister Lopez recently reassured ☐ that resurrecting the plan was intended to keep it alive in case of the collapse of the Nicaraguan insurgency or a move to reimpose extra-regional countries in verification. He maintains that the plan is an all-or-nothing proposal which will require months to negotiate. ☐

- Calls on Nicaragua to withdraw troops from the border and end violations of Honduran territory; asks Managua to declare a broad and unconditional amnesty.
- Honduras and Nicaragua, as well as Honduras and El Salvador, should simultaneously establish security commissions to monitor the borders and disarm any guerrillas. [Tegucigalpa has not given blanket permission for inspections of military bases.]
- Both sets of countries will establish non-military mechanisms to operate refugee and repatriation centers.
- Honduras will consider removing the US military presence if Nicaragua will agree to remove Soviet bloc advisers--subject to verification--and accept mutually agreed arms levels.
- Honduras agrees to host US-Nicaraguan talks. ☐

Nicaragua's Proposals

Background: President Ortega stated on 18 January that Nicaragua did not agree with the decision of the Central American summit to remove the Contadora countries from verification. In

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late January, Nicaragua unilaterally invited the Contadora countries to visit Managua to certify Nicaraguan compliance with the summit agreement. Ortega asked Spain, Italy, Norway, and Sweden to participate in a new verification commission during his trip to those countries at the end of January.

- On 21 February, Nicaragua proposed that a new body include all those it had previously invited, as well as Canada, and West Germany.
- No details given on organization of the body; an earlier verification proposal--presented to the International Verification Commission in mid-September--provided for separate committees for political and security verification; the political commissions would consult reports of the National Reconciliation Commissions, but would not make its own investigations.
- During cease-fire talks with the anti-Sandinista rebels, Nicaragua proposed that an international commission composed of the Contadora countries and a number of international political parties guarantee political rights; the Sandinistas apparently do not intend to discuss this unilateral plan with the Foreign Ministers.
- The Sandinistas also probably will not discuss a verification plan agreed to in separate talks with Miskito Indian rebel Brooklyn Rivera; Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Finland, Holland, Norway, and Switzerland were invited to be witnesses to a cease-fire agreement and to lend material support to development on the Atlantic coast.

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